

## **Chestertown Gas Company (MD-198) Chestertown, Kent Count, Maryland**

### **Site Location**

The .59-acre Chestertown Gas Company site is a former coal-gas manufacturing plant, which is located at 813 West High Street in Chestertown, Kent County, Maryland. The former gas plant is situated on the western side of town, about one mile northwest of the Chester River. An inactive railroad spur is located immediately northeast of the site and is assumed to have been used in transporting materials to and from the site. Directly west of the site is Radcliffe Creek and then farmland. To the north is the Chestertown Cemetery and to the east and south of the site is a combination of both residential and commercial properties.

### **Site History**

The Chestertown Gas Company operated the plant from 1910 to 1928 when the company was sold to the National Public Utilities of Philadelphia. The company stopped manufacturing gas in 1946. The name was then changed to Chestertown Shore Gas Company and began propane gas distribution. After a few years, the Suburban Propane Gas Company of New Jersey bought out a number of propane gas companies on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, one of those being the Propane Gas Division of the Chestertown Shore Gas Company. Cornerstone Propane L.P., a propane gas distributor, currently owns the property and uses the site for propane tank storage

During the approximately 36 years of operation, a water-gas method of coal gasification was utilized. This process involved two different feedstocks. Bunker C fuel oil (the designation for the most thick and sticky of fuel oils) and coal were used to produce gases, that when combined would produce a crude gas with higher British Thermal Units (BTUs). In order to provide a cleaner burning fuel, impurities contained within the gas were removed. When the crude gas cooled, most of the tar, water and ammonia condensed out as waste. The exact additional purification techniques are not known for this plant. However, (ferric oxide purification), a typical method used was purchased in liquid form and then mixed with wood chips, sawdust or a similar medium to increase the gas to liquid contact. Through a chemical reaction with the ferric oxide, sulfur and cyanide compounds and additional traces of tar ammonia were removed from the gas.

The quantities of byproduct wastes generated at the Chestertown Gas Company plant during the 36 years of operation are not known or estimated. No precise information regarding storage and disposal practices of the coal tar and spent oxide wastes at this facility could be found by MDE. Generally, coal gasification generated a large quantity of coal tar wastes and was typically stored on site and sold for roofing, road-making or some other uses

The property is currently used as a storage yard for propane tanks and cylinders, most of which are in poor condition. Nuisance dumping of old appliances, trash, car parts and other debris occurs on site. The only visible indication that a manufactured gas plant existed is a large steel gas holder that remains on the property.

### **Environmental Investigations**

In September 1986, Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) conducted a Preliminary Assessment that investigated the site history and coal-gas production practices. An interview with a former manager at the facility revealed the potential of the existence of a tar pit located between the gas holder and the gas plant. Byproduct waste storage practices could not be determined. A low priority for further investigation was recommended.

In December 1986, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated the site as "No Further Remedial Action Planned" based on MDE's Preliminary Assessment recommendation of low priority for further investigation.

In May 1999, MDE conducted a Site Survey that recommended further investigation by EPA since no sampling of any media on site had occurred to address the potential for coal tar contamination onsite and adjacent wetlands.

In May 2001, MDE conducted a Site Inspection that revealed gross coal tar manufacturing wastes on site. Non-aqueous phase petroleum hydrocarbon contamination from former above ground gasoline storage tanks that were located adjacent to and upgradient from the site to the northeast is likely mobilizing the coal tar wastes into the adjacent wetlands and Radcliffe Creek.

### **Current Status**

In November 2002, MDE notified the property owners, Cornerstone Propane LLC., of their Responsible Party status and potential inclusion onto the EPA's National Priorities List.

### **Facility Contact**

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